

German Interior Minister De Maiziere calls for police state powers

Ulrich Rippert
9 January 2017

The “Guidelines for a strong state in difficult times” published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* by Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) on January 3, amounts to a call for a police state. The interior minister, who is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the constitution, has proposed a series of measures that violate the fundamental principles contained in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany.

The minister’s actions are virtually unprecedented. Such drafts are normally carefully prepared in ministries. “There is pre-planning, followed by preliminary discussions with the minister, then speech writers and press spokespeople get involved, then the work is passed through the hands of a thousand experts,” wrote the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. “And then, only then, is an opinion piece by a minister published.”

But this time, the minister reportedly wrote the text largely alone over the Christmas break. Bypassing all political committees and democratic decision-making, he presented his provocative demands to his ministry in a conservative daily newspaper.

At the heart of the wide-ranging catalogue of demands is the centralisation and strengthening of the country’s security apparatus. The federal structures of the police and intelligence agencies and their strict separation—codified in the Basic Law following the bitter experiences of Hitler’s state secret police (Gestapo)—would thereby be largely done away with.

De Maiziere called for the federal state to have “management competencies over all security agencies.” The powers of the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) and federal police are to be expanded, the domestic intelligence agencies in the states dismantled and integrated into a centralised domestic intelligence service.

The federal police, a paramilitary force which emerged from the border protection force and was originally only responsible for border security, will in future no longer be confined to border regions, but instead operate throughout the country. The German army is also to be deployed more regularly domestically. “Debates about this may have been understandable in the past. Now they are no longer,” wrote the interior minister.

What lies behind de Maiziere’s proposals?

For his part, he justified it by referring to the “horrific attack on the Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin.” But it is already clear that in that case there was no lack of competencies, information or cooperation between the intelligence agencies. They had the suspected perpetrator Anis Amri under surveillance, knew his movements and various identities, and were aware of his plans for an attack and his relations with militant Islamists. They were so well informed that the question is posed as to whether they allowed him to carry out the attack in order to provide a pretext for the strengthening of the state apparatus.

One must look elsewhere for de Maiziere’s real motive. It is the social storm brewing in Germany and throughout Europe.

Social tensions are already at the breaking point. While a tiny minority is enriching itself fabulously at the top of society, working conditions for the vast majority are becoming ever harder and incomes are declining.

Should US President-elect Donald Trump follow through on his trade war pledges, this would have drastic consequences for Germany’s export-dependent economy. The same applies to the breakup of the European Union, which is progressing rapidly in the wake of Britain’s Brexit vote. In the Netherlands,

Austria, France and Italy, where elections take place this year, parties hostile to the EU have significant chances of emerging victorious.

In Germany, the mounting anger at the established parties is currently finding expression in the growth of the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD). But this will not remain so. In addition, the German government is rearming the military and preparing a vast expansion of foreign interventions, against which it anticipates significant opposition.

A recent edition of *Der Spiegel*, titled “The great erosion,” described some of these developments and posed the question, “Can it be that a revolution awaits?”

Under these conditions, de Maiziere’s proposal is aimed at prevention and suppression. Under the pretext of combatting terrorism, a “strong state” is being built and readied to suppress social opposition and resistance to militarism.

Many similarities with the 1930s are present. At that time, the ruling class responded to the radicalisation of the working class following the financial crisis and mass unemployment in 1929 by governing with emergency decrees and ultimately assisting Hitler to take power, even though his party controlled just one third of seats in the Reichstag. He was needed to destroy the workers’ movement and prepare the next war.

Thomas de Maiziere knows this history very well. He has to some degree grown up in Germany’s intelligence agencies, which have survived all of the twists and turns of German history and always served the interests of the ruling elite.

As a Wehrmacht officer, his father Ulrich de Maiziere served throughout the Second World War, including the Polish offensive and the siege of Leningrad. In the closing months of the war, he was a close confidant of Hitler as first officer of the general staff, and was highly valued. He continued his career as an officer in the Federal Republic and became General Inspector of the German army in 1966.

The elder de Maiziere’s brother, Clemens de Maiziere, was a member of the CDU in East Germany and a long-term collaborator with the Stasi. His son, Lothar de Maiziere, the interior minister’s cousin, was the last prime minister of the German Democratic Republic and dissolved it in 1990.

De Maiziere’s proposal is a warning. For some time, representatives of the ruling class have asserted that democracy and democratic rights are entrenched and that there would never be a return to dictatorship and war in Germany as in the 1930s. But social and political conflicts have only begun to emerge and they are already resorting to police state methods.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact